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ENG 1092C-095: Composition and Literature

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Composition and Literature English 1092

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Give us a new work of genius of any kind, and if it is alive, and fired with some more vital feeling than contempt, you will see how automatically the old and false makes itself air before the new and true.

Willa Cather

"Composition and Literature" is a course that blends the study of literature and writing out of the belief that we can only write as well as we can read. People who are seriously interested in writing, creative artists especially, are also usually, if not always, serious readers, appreciative of other writers' skill with language and the possibilities of expression. Sometimes writers find inspiration or challenge in the work of others, suggestions of ways to improve their own work or directions they might take, and sometimes they find simple pleasure in someone else's work well done, and perhaps the inspiration to move others as they have been moved.

The course is also founded on the belief that artists, perhaps living and perhaps living now, have something to say about the world, about getting on or off with it, about the contexts of the lives. Writing is a way of saying what we think, what we feel, what we see, and in general to take a look at the world or some small piece of it that a particular writer believes to be important. What these important pieces are is finally up to the reader to decide, but it's my conviction that writers and other creative artists help us see things we might not ordinarily see and lead us to understand the world in ways truly valuable and necessary.

Overall, my hope for this course is that you will sharpen your already strong writing skills, as well as develop your ability to read and interpret creative writing from different time periods and in the different genres of poetry, drama, and fiction. I will ask you to write in various modes based on what we read together as a group, from keeping an in-class notebook to more formal papers, some perhaps with a research base; you will also be responsible for several class presentations on things you will read on your own. My goal for every writing courses, especially an honors one, is that each person in the class will write about 20-30 pages so in the course of the semester.

Course policies are fairly straight forward--I expect you to do the reading thoroughly, come to class regularly, and turn your work in on time. Certain things I can be flexible about, but I also expect each person to hold up his or her end of the bargain. The final grade for the course will be based on an assessment of your overall performance in the class, including the quality of your written work, degree of participation in class discussions, and daily involvement in the work of the course. Evaluation of your work will come primarily in the several rounds of conferences that will take place in the course of the semester.